

Summary of Feedback from the Belfast Tourism Forum (BTF) Workshop on 7 June 2012 at The MAC

Introduction

This is a report from a strategy and action planning review workshop held on the subject of implementing the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010-14 (BISTF) and refreshing the Belfast Tourism Forum Action Plan 2012. The workshop was attended by 18 people and facilitated by Richard O’Rawe. An attendance list is attached as Appendix 1 and a long list of points raised at the workshop is included as Appendix 2.

The follow report is a summary of the conclusions reached at the workshop.

General Feedback on the Forum

Asked about what participants felt was good about the work of the Forum they identified a number of areas of note:

- The Council has done a good job in facilitating the Forum
- Participants complimented the work done to get the BISTF developed and the way that the BFT Action Plan 2012 had been drawn together and used to engender cohesion and partnership working
- Playing an important role in getting tourism put on the mainstream economic agenda of Northern Ireland
- Practical work to profile and promote the city and indeed to dress the city: people felt it was “looking good for visitors”.

There was general consensus that the Forum provided a vehicle for developing and coordinating the tourism sector’s response to programmes of work to attract visitors to and keep them longer in, the city.

Future of the Forum

Comments on the future of the Forum can be summarised as follows:

- BCC is best placed to lead the Forum and facilitate coordination
- There was a desire for BCC to actively manage the Forum to ensure engagement and integration across Forum members
- Leadership can be shared with different members leading in different project areas
- The Forum can act as a sounding board and sector voice on some tourism matters
- It was suggested that the Forum should increase private sector input and participation
- The revised and updated action plan should be shorter and more focused.

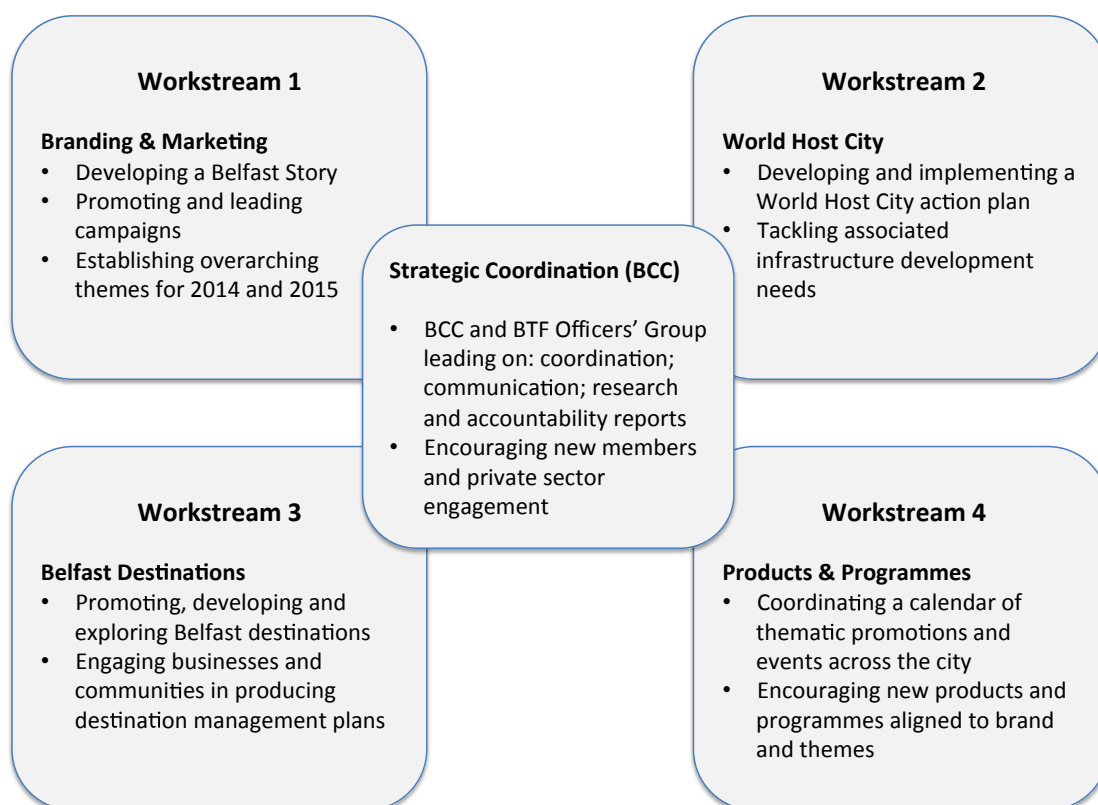
Suggested Way Forward

Following discussion there was broad acceptance that the Framework (BISTF) was still valid and relevant and that the BTF Action Plan be updated to cover the period 2012-13. There was a request for the Action Plan to be focused and less detailed. In summary, the following areas and potential lead organisations were highlighted for attention in 2012-13:-

- | | |
|----------------------------|------|
| 1. Strategic Coordination | BCC |
| 2. Branding & Marketing | BVCB |
| 3. World Host City | BCC |
| 4. Belfast Destinations | BCC |
| 5. Products and Programmes | BCC |

The suggestion is that these form workstreams with a project leader for each. The broad agenda for each workstream is illustrated in the diagram below.

Coordination and Workstreams 2012-13



Other ideas suggested for retention and inclusion in the BTF Action Plan 2012-13 included:

- City dressing
- Visitor pass
- Tours
- Developing volunteers
- Digital Belfast

- Action plans for designated city destinations

Forum Meetings and Communication

The Forum will continue to meet quarterly with reports being presented from the workstreams and from invited speakers. There is also a continuing role for the Officers Group so that work is being coordinated between meetings. One suggestion was for a new ToR to be drawn up for this Officers' Group.

There is a desire for the Council to coordinate and also to ensure that there is regular communication across the Forum. The Council should develop a communication plan to ensure that all members and wider stakeholders are kept up-to-date with new developments in city tourism.

Appendix 1**Attendance List from the Belfast Tourism Forum Workshop of
7 June 2012**

Shirley McCay	BCC
Kerrie Sweeney	BCC
Wendi Kane	BCC
Roisin McKee	People 1st
David Carson	UU
Dee Morgan	NITGA
David McAnirn	NITGA
Aine Kearney	NITB
Judith Webb	NITB
Jim Bradley	Belfast Hills Partnership
Anne Trainor	Invest NI
Claire Bradshaw	Titanic Belfast
Mandy Patrick	East Belfast Partnership
Lawerence Stanford	DCAL
Andrew Irvine	BCCM
Gerry Lennon	BVCB
Sean Quinn	Fáilte Feirste Thair

Appendix 2

Long List of Issues Raised During the Belfast Tourism Forum Workshop on 7 June 2012

Section 1: “Plus” What has Gone Well

- Tourism Framework itself
 - Cohesion
 - Partnership
- Profile of Belfast/N.I.
 - Titanic
 - Events
- Tourism accepted as economic driver (by Government)
- City pride
- Marketing of city
 - Our Time, Our Place
 - Maritime heritage
- City looks good.

Section 2: “Delta” Challenges Faced and Areas for Improvement

- Evolve Titanic brand
 - Industrial
 - Maritime
- Licencing
 - Opening hours/Sundays
- Belfast City Marketing (Stand alone/Independent Company?)
- Cross Selling – Communication – Integration
- Digital Capacity
 - Tourists and infrastructure
- Languages
- Quality control
 - Taxi tours – regulate/pricing

What is the Next Big Thing for Us?

- Better knowledge of what’s happening
- Enhanced support
 - Microbusinesses
 - Local communities
- Bilaterals - outside of Forum
- Opportunities for future
 - Did you know?
 - Belfast story 2013/14/15
- Belfast Story
- Maintain momentum
- New ways to increase spend

Section 3: Priorities for Action

- Evolve the brand
- Belfast Story
 - Definition
 - Visitor experience
 - Political history
- Continue to take forward
 - Main drivers/destinations
 - Maritime heritage
 - Cultural strategy
 - Continuity and momentum
- Identify and Develop new products
 - Sport
 - Film studios
 - Art tours
- Languages (BCC take lead)
 - Tour guides (linguists)
 - Use of students
 - Technology
- Transport/access
- Accommodation
 - Quality
 - Character
 - More
- Delivery of framework
 - Ownership/action by members of forum
- Lobby for VAT reduction, and Airport Passenger Duty and improve access (Lord Mayor/Council)
- Community based tourism support (BAPs?)
- Timely, Robust Accurate Data (e.g, ASM Howarth and led by BCC)
- 4. Visitor spend ££ (BVCB/BCC)
 - Research and identify best practice locations
 - Action plan
 - Business training SMEs
 - Belfast MET
 - UU
 - DEL/Invest NI
- Evolution of brand
 - BVCB facilitate/BCC/BAPs
- Commit Belfast to being a world host destination
 - Cultural awareness
 - Language guides
 - Customer service and spend
 - Continuous monitoring
 - Business skills
 - BCC supported by NITB, People 1st, delivery partners
- Reininvigorate the brand messages (BVCB)
- Develop the Belfast Story further and communicate to the trade (BCC)

Section 4: Summary

- What we really want to see in the updated Action Plan for 2013/14
- Action of feedback
 - Providers taken to task on manners, quality of welcome, street cleansing etc.
- Airport Passenger Duty
- Direct Access
 - Transport
- VAT Reduction
 - Campaign lobby
- Community Based Tourism
 - BAPS
 - Central Coordination
- Evolution of Brand
 - Reinvigorate
 - A focus for the Forum
 - Delivery support
 - Community – define what this means
 - Belfast Story (local and visitor)
- Data and Research
 - BCC
 - NI Hospitality Federation HF
 - Capture from members
 - NITB
- Accommodation Mix
 - Character
- New Products
 - Casement Park – potential for concerts etc.
 - Film Studios
 - Game of Thrones etc.
- Themes
 - Music
 - Maritime
- World Host City
 - BCC+
 - Supporting activities

Section 5: Feedback on the Forum

- Good for integration
- BCC prepared to lead – this is needed
- Heartbeat for tourism sector (+listening)
- Works well (3-4 meetings a year)
- Officers' group to deliver
- Themed meetings and challenges
- More two-way interaction at meetings
- Build in challenge for reality checks and feedback

- Need clear hook to attract attention and common issues
- Thematic focused issues to be debated
- More focused action plan
- Membership – more private sector input
- BCC engages sectoral clusters (food, music, literary)
- Potential voice for the sector
- Great representation across industry.